

Friday, October 19, 2007

**NTSB Meets to Discuss Railroad and Aviation Accidents**

In a public board meeting on October 16, the National Transportation Safety Board met to discuss the January 2007 accident of a WMATA Metro Train, along with the April 2006 accident of an unmanned aircraft operated by the U.S. Customs and Border Protection.

In the meeting's first item, the NTSB said that the probable cause of the derailment of the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA) train was a wheel climb on a car as it traversed a standard turnout near the Mt. Vernon Square station. The wheel climb was initiated by a rough wheel surface created during maintenance, the Board determined. The accident was also caused by the lack of quality control measures to ensure that wheel surfaces were smoothed during the maintenance procedure, the lack of a guard rail on the No. 8 turnout, and WMATA's failure to have an effective process to implement safety improvements identified following similar accidents and related research projects.

On January 7, 2007, about 3:45 pm, northbound WMATA Greenline Metrorail train 504 derailed one car (the 5th of 6 cars) as it traversed a crossover from track 2 to track 1. About 80 passengers were on board at the time of the accident. Twenty-three passengers were transported to local hospitals for treatment and released.

The Board's report states that the wheels on the fifth car had been trued (truing restores the shape of a wheel and removes surface defects such as flat spots) at a WMATA maintenance facility 2 days prior to the derailment using a milling machine, and the car had been returned to train service the day of the accident. The surface of the wheel that climbed the rail displayed a "fish scale" appearance and had pronounced ridges. The Board noted that a rough wheel surface finish from wheel truing increases the probability of a wheel climb derailment. Running the cars through curved yard track and turnouts can polish newly trued wheel surfaces until the rough finish is smoothed over the entire tread surface; however, WMATA does not follow that practice. The Safety Board therefore concludes that WMATA's lack of measures to smooth wheel surfaces after truing increases the potential for a wheel climb derailment.

The investigation found irregularities in the dimensions of recently trued wheels at WMATA, including the wheel that derailed in this accident. Although the overall profile of the wheel was accurate, measurements indicated that more material was being removed during the truing operation than was necessary. It was noted in the investigation that the cutting device on the milling machine that was used on the wheel was found to be out of alignment. The Board found that although the misalignment of the milling machine used in the wheel truing operation did not contribute to the wheel climb, it does indicate inadequacies in WMATA's quality assurance process.

Later that morning, the Board met to discuss the April 2006 accident of an unmanned aircraft that occurred in Arizona.

The Board issued a total of 22 safety recommendations as a result of its first investigation of an accident involving an unmanned aircraft (UA). The safety recommendations approved by the Board stemmed from the April 25, 2006, accident in which a turboprop-powered Predator B operated on a surveillance mission by the United States Customs and Border Protection (CPB) crashed in a sparsely populated residential area near Nogales, Arizona. No one on the ground was injured; the remotely piloted 66-foot wingspan aircraft was substantially damaged.



The Safety Board determined that the probable cause of the accident was the pilot's failure to use checklist procedures when switching operational control from a console that had become inoperable due to a "lockup" condition, which resulted in the fuel valve inadvertently being shut off and the subsequent total loss of engine power, and a lack of a flight instructor in the Ground Control Station.

At the Board meeting, the NTSB highlighted several areas of particular interest including: the design and certification of the unmanned aircraft system; pilot qualification and training; the integration of UAs into the air traffic management system; and audio records of all UA operations-related communications. The Safety Board's investigation also revealed that the pilot was not proficient in the performance of emergency procedures, which led to the accident.

On the issue of UA operations-related communications, the Safety Board noted that there is no equivalent of a cockpit voice recorder at the pilot's control console and that the pilot's communications with air traffic controllers and others were not recorded. To enhance the efficacy of future investigations of UA incidents and accidents, the NTSB recommended that the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) require all conversations, including telephone conversations between unmanned aircraft pilots and air traffic control, other UA pilots, and other assets that provide operational support to unmanned system aircraft system operations, be recorded and retained.

After adopting the safety recommendations, the Board voted to convene a public forum on the safety of UA operations and the methodologies to use when investigating UA accident and incidents. The dates and agenda for the 2- to 3-day forum will be announced once details are finalized.

## ***Chairman Rosenker Addresses the Cargo Airline Association***

Reiterating the agency's continuing interest in cargo airline safety, Chairman Mark Rosenker addressed the Cargo Airline Association at their semi-annual gathering on October 17, in Washington, D.C.

Chairman Rosenker said that the cargo industry can take pride in having suffered only 3 fatal crashes in the last 10 years, given the many thousands of operations they fly every year. However, cargo fires still remain a problem that the industry must address.

Cargo aircraft are required only to have a fire detection system, not a fire suppression system, for in-flight cargo fire protection. The NTSB recommended in 1998 that the Federal Aviation Administration explore the possibility of requiring such systems. The FAA has declined to require them, citing the added weight such a system would provide. "The Safety Board continues to encourage the FAA to evaluate currently available systems and promote new technology to reduce weight, increase reliability and create a system whose cost will encourage operators to install them," Rosenker said. In fact, he said, a major cargo carrier has introduced such a system into its aircraft that meets all these criteria.

## ***Vice Chairman Sumwalt Speaks at Airline Dispatchers Symposium***

Vice Chairman Robert Sumwalt spoke to the Airline Dispatchers Federation Safety Symposium in Houston, TX on October 15th. The Vice Chairman's presentation stressed the vital role of the dispatcher in providing another layer of safety. He addressed opportunities for dispatchers to take a more proactive approach in interacting with pilots in the shared responsibility of flight decisions, such as when providing weather information in routing or landing decisions. To this end, he discussed the Southwest Airlines accident at Chicago's Midway Airport, and recommendations stemming from that accident that are relevant to dispatchers. "These recommendations should go a long way towards reducing the likelihood of an overrun during inclement weather, and improving training and guidelines for dispatchers and pilots alike." The presentation was well received among both dispatchers and symposium sponsors alike, including aerospace manufacturers and commercial carriers - who are the ones involved in decisions affecting both present and future approaches to dispatch and flight operations management.

## ***Member Chealander Meets with Various Transportation Companies***



Member Steve Chealander and special assistant Mary Jane Smith ventured to the Los Angeles, Ca. area recently to visit several transportation companies. During their stay, they touched upon marine, railroad and aviation safety. Member Chealander and Mary Jane began the trip with a tour and meeting aboard Princess Cruises' *Island Princess* ship, where former NTSB employee Morgan Turrell escorted them. The next day, the two met with officials at the Los Angeles International Airport to discuss runway incursion safety issues. The rest of the trip was dedicated to learning more about the operations at the Ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach, from both the marine and railroad viewpoints. This included a trip in the head-end of a Union Pacific train through the Alameda Corridor and a tour of the Port from a U.S. Coast Guard vessel.

***Member Chealander, Mary Jane Smith and Captain Turrell aboard the Island Princess ship.***

## ***Board Members Tour CSX Railyard***



***Member Higgins and Member Hersman accompanied by NTSB and CSX Staff***

On Thursday morning, October 18th, CSX Safety officials and RPH investigators hosted Member Debbie Hersman and Nancy Lewis, Member Kitty Higgins and Denise Daniels, Dana Sanzo and Alice Park for a familiarization tour at the CSX Benning Road Yard. On Thursday afternoon, Chairman Rosenker and Tom Doyle, Member Steven Chealander and Mary Jane Smith, and Bob Chipkevich visited the CSX Yard.

Bruce Rose and Jimmy Gruppiso (directors of CSX's Train Accident Prevention Team) and Tom Coglianese (Senior General Foreman, Baltimore Division) provided a safety briefing to avoid injuries while in the Yard. That morning, CSX officials learned that the Washington Division has now gone two years without an employee on-the-job injury – an unprecedented and enviable safety record. All Safety Board employees wore personal protective equipment, required by CSX, and contributed to the injury-free record.

The CSX employees and Bob Chipkevich, Jim Southworth, Dave Watson and Dick Hipskind of

RPH briefed the Members and staff and participated in a detailed inspection of a CSX 70-ton freight car and its truck assembly and component parts. CSX raised the car off the truck assembly, giving Board Members and staff nearly unfettered access to view the various components that affect stability, steering and operation of the car. The familiarization tour provided welcome insight into the mechanical underpinning of a freight rail car that will prove beneficial in review of railroad reports.



***Chairman Rosenker and Member Chealander accompanied by NTSB and CSX Staff***



## NTSB Certificate of Appreciation Presented to U.S. Coast Guard

Chairman Rosenker presented the members of the U.S. Coast Guard - Air Station Miami with an NTSB Certificate of Appreciation on October 10. This certificate was awarded to Air Station Miami to thank them for their assistance to the Board during the August 1 bridge collapse in Minneapolis, MN. At the time of the collapse, the Chairman was in Miami meeting with the Southern Regional Office and needed to get to Minneapolis as soon as possible to perform his duties as Board Member on-scene. The Coast Guard offered their equipment and crew to transport Chairman Rosenker and Brenda Yager from Miami to Minneapolis, at 1:00AM. Arriving in Minnesota just before 5:00AM, the Chairman and Ms. Yager were able to perform their duties and assist in the investigation in a timely manner. Pictured with Chairman Rosenker is Commander David Walker and members of the flight crew: AMT3 Matthew Klee, AET2 Jason Stanberry, and LCDR Mike Shirk.



## Combined Federal Campaign Kick-off



A charity fair will be held in the Boardroom to kick-off the Safety Board's 2007 Combined Federal Campaign on Thursday, October 25, from 11:00 until 1:00. Twenty charities will be attending including Earth Share, Christ House, Angel Flight, For Love of Children, and many more! Cake and refreshments will be provided!

## 2008 Federal Benefits Program Open Season

It's time to mark your calendar for the annual Federal Benefits Program open season. Employees can choose to participate or make changes to current elections, from November 12-December 10, under the following programs:

- The Federal Employees Health Benefits Program (FEHB) - Review your health coverage to see if your carrier has made any changes for 2008. NTSB's Health Fair will be held on Wednesday, November 7, 2007, in the Conference Center, Rooms A & B.
- The Federal Employees Dental and Vision Insurance Program (FEDVIP) - Review your dental and vision benefit and out-of-pocket expenses to see if you need any supplemental insurance.
- The Flexible Spending Account Program (FSAFeds) - Review your out-of-pocket expenses for health and dependent care and take advantage of a pre-taxed account. Remember: Enrollment in FSAFeds does not carry over from year to year. If you want to participate in 2008, you must make a new election during the open season period.

More detailed information will be issued soon on all of the above programs. For questions, contact Lisa Kleiner in Human Resources Division on (202) 314-6462.

## Historic Artifact Donated to the NTSB



Mr. Edgar Peden of Poolesville, Maryland, presents what appears to be one of the Safety Board's founding documents to Deputy Managing Director David Mayer. The artifact, the commissioning document for Member Francis McAdams, was signed by President Lyndon Johnson and Secretary of State Dean Rusk on April 20, 1967, the first month of the Board's existence. McAdams and four others became the first Members of the Board on May 1 of that year. Mr. Peden purchased the document at a yard sale and felt that the proper place for the document was at the NTSB. He donated it to the Board on October 11.

## A Message From The NTSB Employee Assistance Program

**The Importance of Family Communication:** To help your children grow up to be healthy adults, ongoing and open family communication is vital. Discuss issues that are important to your family such as values, relationships, money management, and decision-making in a calm, respectful manner. For tips on effective family communication, call an Employee Assistance Program (EAP) representative at 1-800-334-2178 for confidential help or visit online at [www.feibh.com/ntsb](http://www.feibh.com/ntsb).

Remember, the NTSB EAP is a free, confidential counseling and referral service available to all employees for a variety of personal and work issues. The EAP provides resources to help resolve personal problems that may be affecting your health, well-being, family life or job performance. The EAP is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week to provide assistance to you and your family members for a wide range of concerns. Help is just a call or click away.

The EAPost Fall 2007 Newsletter is now available on the NTSB Intranet at <http://www.feibh.com/resource/lib/eapostfall2007/EAPost%20Fall%202007-English.pdf> providing tips on how to handle "Role Overload", preparing for the transition from high school to college, preparing for the stress of the upcoming holidays, do-it-yourself performance.